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RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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RURAL MINNESOTA COMMUNITY FINDS KEYS TO PROGRESS, GROWTH

Some 136 miles northwest of Minneapolis, the community of Staples, Minnesota, (Population 4,000) has experienced dramatic changes in the past 10 years.

Deposits at the Staples State Bank have more than doubled, to reach about $8.0 million.

The Staples Area Vocational-Technical School, founded in 1960, has been expanded six times and has more than 500 students.

Four young doctors and a dentist, all under 35, occupy a new $250,000 clinic. There are also two other doctors and two other dentists.

There is a model upgraded elementary school with teaching machines, team teaching and other innovations which attracted 4,000 visitors last school year.

Four new industries have settled there, adding nearly 200 manufacturing jobs to the community payroll.

Several home grown industries have expanded.

Hard-surfaced runways and lighting have been installed at the municipal airport, in part to accommodate planes for the companies with plants in town.

Key elements in Staples' success:

* Its citizens formed a development corporation in 1960.

* Four years ago, a pilot program of Concerted Services in Training and Education (CSTE) helped in coordination and use of local resources and in seeking outside technical assistance and funds. A list of Federal and State programs utilized by the Staples community runs 3½ pages.

CSTE is a joint effort of seven Federal departments and agencies, together with State and local agencies to coordinate and focus employment, training and education programs in Rural America.

FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION TAKES
ACTION TO ASSIST LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

The Farmers Home Administration has moved recently on three fronts to assist low-income families in Rural America--

*HOME SITE IMPROVEMENT loans authorized in the Housing Act of 1969 were announced as available to local public agencies and private nonprofit organizations to buy and develop land as homesites for sale to rural people of low and moderate income.

Development organizations may use homesite loan funds to buy and clear land, build improvements such as access roads, streets and utility installations, and pay other costs involved in the development of the sites.

The agency can lend qualified agencies or organizations up to $100,000 for buying and developing tracts that can be sold as homesites within two years.

Sites developed under the program can be used for individual family-owned homes, for rental or cooperative housing.

*SELF-HELP HOUSING ASSISTANCE--New financial assistance is now available to local public and private nonprofit organizations to help low-income families organize and carry out self-help home building projects. This program also was authorized by the Housing Act of 1969.

Under a self-help plan, families organize into informal groups and help each other build homes with their own labor under the guidance of a construction supervisor.

Under the new agreements, FHA will pay the bills incurred by the organization in hiring personnel and for office and administrative costs necessary to carry out a technical assistance program for self-help groups. Funds also may be used to make working equipment such as power tools available to families, and to pay for training or technical consultation not readily available without cost to self-help participants.

*ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY LOANS--The Office of Economic Opportunity provided $4 million for economic opportunity loans to be made in April, May and June of this year through the nationwide county office system of the FHA.

These loans underwrite the self-help efforts of low-income families to earn more by improving their production of small farms, by establishing, improving or expanding small business enterprises needed in their rural localities, or to form cooperatives to supply goods or services such families can use in efforts to improve their income.

Loans of up to $3,500 can be made to buy tools, sewing machines and any number of other kinds of equipment for small family enterprises.

CLEAN-UP DRILL

Nearly 20,000 Texas Army and Air National Guardsmen spent an hour during May drill voluntarily cleaning up public property in their communities.

SHARING SERVICES HELPS CHILDREN IN SMALL RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Among the first efforts to seek a solution to rural problems through the sharing of services among rural school districts was the Catskill Area School Study Council in upstate New York, according to Dr. Frank L. Heesacker in the April, 1970 issue of "American Education" magazine. Dr. Heesacker is director of research at Northern Montana College.

Servicing about 30 schools, Dr. Heesacker recounts, the Catskill council offers:

In-service programs for teachers, institutes for school board members, and a program of Saturday seminars for high school students--held at the State University College in Oneonta.

This year, the 12th year of the seminar program, the council is offering 31 seminars with courses that include computer processing; Oriental philosophies; crime, criminals and prisons; cast metal sculpture and expository writing. There is also a seminar in psychology taught by amplified telephone and telewriting for two school systems 60 miles from Oneonta.

The council also sponsors a series of summer seminars. In the summer of 1968, for example, a basic aviation ground school course was given as preparation for anyone desiring a private pilot's license.

"American Education" is published by the Office of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT COMPETITION DRAWS 51 ENTRANTS IN TEXAS

The first Governor's Community Achievement Award competition in Texas has drawn 51 entrants from among eligible communities--those with a population of 12,000 or less.

Winners will be announced June 11 at the annual workshop of the Beautify Texas Council. They were to be judged on the basis of citizen participation and education, economic development, community-wide beautification and property improvement. Those categories and the summary--which tells HOW--were each rated 20 points in the judging.

The award is in conjunction with the Texas Communities Tommorow program.

LILA REMOVES JUNK CARS FROM GEORGIA LANDSCAPE

In Lanier County, Georgia, the sight of junk cars spurred the people to action. Lanier County had 5,097 people in it at the last Census. Tired of seeing junked cars on the landscape, they formed "Let's Improve Lanier's Appearance" (LILA), a committee which agreed to move junk cars from anyone's premises without cost. A local automobile dealer hauls them to the junk yard without charge. An out-of-town contractor comes in, salvages usable parts, crushes the rest into compact packages and takes them out of the county.

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NEW YORK COUNTIES LURE
DOCTORS WITH SCHOLARSHIPS

Allegany County, New York has established a medical scholarship program to encourage qualified physicians to live and practice medicine in that rural county of 43,978 inhabitants.

The program will be similar to those already operating in nearby Wyoming and Livingston Counties, authorized under New York State Education Law.

Under the medical scholarship programs, recipients agree to practice one year within their benefactor county for each year of scholarship aid, up to a maximum of three years. However, they may also opt to repay the scholarship.

The program in Allegany County has been authorized at a first-year cost of $6,000.

Information on such programs in New York State may be obtained by writing: The Office of Medical Manpower, State Health Department, 84 Holland Avenue, Albany, New York 12208.

MORE THAN CENTURY AGO
DE TOCQUEVILLE OBSERVED:

"These Americans are the most peculiar people in the world. In a local community in their country a citizen may conceive of some need which is not being met. What does he do? He goes across the street and discusses it with his neighbor. Then what happens? A committee comes into existence and then the committee begins functioning on behalf of that need. You won't believe this, but it's true. All of this is done without reference to any bureaucrat. All of this is done by the private citizens of their own initiative."